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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

October 31, 1962

TO : The Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM : I. - Roger Hilsman

SUBJECT: Mikoyan's Mission to New York and Havana.

The Man. Mikoyan is a close associate of Khrushchev's, in some respects his mentor. He has been a troubleshooter in the past, e.g. going to Budapest in the early days of the 1956 revolt to seek a modus vivendi with Nagy. He is the only top Soviet leader who has visited Havana before. His reputation, deservedly so, is that of an agile trader, and of, perhaps, the sharpest intellect in the leadership. He showed courage in leading the de-Stalinization drive, but has also exhibited ample prudence in surviving at the top longer than any of his colleagues.

The Setting. Mikoyan's mission occurs at a time when there is considerable evidence (1) of Soviet efforts to seek further compensations for removing the Cuban missiles (see our Research Memorandum, RSB-174, of this date) and (2) of Castro's opposition to verification and insistence on the need for further US guarantees for his regime.

The Purpose. Mikoyan's first objective is probably to determine on the spot the limits of US willingness to bargain over the terms for Soviet removal of the missiles, and, having gauged US intent, to exert the necessary pressure on Castro to accommodate himself to the situation. Specifically, if Mikoyan concludes that the US will insist on some form of verification on Cuban soil as a sine qua non without which military action will ensue, he will almost certainly use all his talent and leverage to make Castro swallow the pill. In the process, he will assure Castro of future Soviet economic support and military protection, although it is doubtful that he can dispel Castro's skepticism on the latter score now that the USSR has demonstrated it will not go to war for his sake.

Summary. We think it likely that Mikoyan has authority to bring Castro into line. He may have authority to throw Castro to the wolves if he judges a high risk of war to be the alternative; but we think it likely that Moscow believes that a man of Mikoyan's skill can avoid such a choice by driving a bargain which will enable both the USSR and Castro to emerge with at least a tolerable position.

Advance Man For Khrushchev. Finally, we think it probable that Mikoyan will also have the function of assessing US intentions beyond the immediate issues and, if desirable, to lay the groundwork for a Khrushchev-Kennedy meeting.

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